

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, the fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we reflected on being called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world – to be witnesses of God’s Light, Truth, Life, and Steadfast Love. At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus called his followers to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Before the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, His last words were, “You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8). Witnessing was a command, not a choice. The disciples boldly testified, “we were eyewitnesses from the beginning” (Luke 1:2).

Pope Francis reminds us, “Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful temples and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and give witness to him every day. We are not a religion of ideas, of pure theology, of beautiful things and commandments. No, we are a people who follow Jesus Christ and give witness -- that is, want to give witness to Jesus Christ -- and this witness sometimes ends up being giving one's life.”

A witness testifies to what is seen or heard and verifies what is true. In court, a witness must swear to “tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.” If you were on trial and needed character witnesses, who would you call to speak on your behalf? Naturally, you would want people who would speak favorably of you and who were capable of describing experiences in which they saw your traits, virtues, and character in action. You would want them to speak from the heart. You would want them to share stories in which they were personally impacted by you. You would want people who could convince a jury that you were someone who could be trusted and whose witness could be trusted.

Jesus commissioned his disciples to be with him and to go from him to be his apostles (Mark 3:13-15). The word apostle means ‘one who is sent.’ The disciples were called to be with their master and are sent from the master with the master’s mission - to be his witnesses. Today, we are called to be with Jesus just as the Apostles were, to walk with him, to learn from him and to form and shape our character in him. Only this “being with Jesus” makes witnessing to him possible. How could we witness to someone whom we have not seen or heard or experienced? Let us choose to “be with Jesus” – to know him more, to love him more and be his witnesses.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fifth Week In Ordinary Time

February 9- 14, 2026

**Lord, teach me to be simple and humble in my ways!
Help me not to busy myself with great matters, things too sublime for me.
Free my heart from pride and arrogance, resentment, and bitterness
and from all things that burden my soul.**

February 9 – Monday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**Change what cannot be accepted and accept what cannot be changed.
(Reinhold Niebuhr)**

1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13

King Solomon and the elders went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice and the priests carried the Ark of the Lord, which contained only the two stone tablets which Moses had put there. There they had a tremendous experience of the glory of the Lord and Solomon began to believe that he had built a house in which the Lord had chosen to dwell.

Psalm 132

**Advance, O Lord, to your resting place,
You and the ark of your majesty.
May your priests be clothed with justice;
Let your faithful ones shout merrily for joy.**

Mark 6:53-56

Jesus and his disciples went to a deserted place to be by themselves. People came to know about it and reached the place ahead of them. Jesus had compassion on those who were hungry and tired, and he fed them with five loaves and a couple of fish. **Jesus saw people in need and reached out to them. He and his disciples had gone to the place for rest. Seeing people in need, Jesus, moved with compassion, ministered to them.**

Then Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. In the middle of the night, seeing his disciples on troubled waters, he came to them and gave them courage and comfort and called them to trust in him.

Be confident. The Lord will be there in your troublesome times. Turn to him for strength and support in testing times.

Jesus and his disciples crossed over to Gennesareth and people came from all over to touch and be touched by Jesus.... All kinds of people found the power of healing in that touch - the healing touch of Jesus. Mark tells us that all who touched Jesus got well.

May your touch be affirming, compassionate, encouraging, gentle, healing, kind, loving, sensitive, supportive, transforming.....

Saint of the day, February 9 - St. Josephine Bakhita and 20 other saints are remembered this day

Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the village of Olgossa in the Darfur region of Sudan. Historians believe that sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. She was bought and sold many times. As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel. Her owners mistreated her, punished her cruelly and often incapacitated her. The wife of one of her masters ordered her to be scarred. As her mistress watched, ready with a whip, another woman drew patterns on her skin with flour, then cut into her flesh with a blade. She rubbed the wounds with salt to make the scars permanent. She would suffer a total of 114 scars from this abuse.

In 1883, the Turkish general sold her to the Italian Vice Consul, Callisto Legani. He was a much kinder master and he did not beat her. When it was time for him to return to Italy, she begged to be taken with him, and he agreed. After the arrival in Italy, she was given away to another family as a gift and she served them as a nanny. When her new mistress decided to travel to Sudan without Josephine, she placed her in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. While she was in the custody of the sisters, she came to learn about God. She was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ.

When her mistress returned from Sudan, Josephine refused to leave. Her mistress spent three days trying to persuade her to leave the sisters, but Josephine remained steadfast. The superior of the institute complained to Italian authorities on Josephine's behalf. The case went to court, and the court found that slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born. So, she could not be lawfully made slave. She was declared free. For the first time in her life, Josephine was free and could choose what to do with her life. She chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters.

She was baptized on January 9, 1890 and took the name Josephine Margaret and Fortunata. (Fortunata is the Latin translation for her Arabic name, Bakhita). She also received the sacraments of her first holy communion and confirmation on the same day. The Archbishop

who gave her the sacraments was Giuseppe Sarto, the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X.

Josephine took her final vows on December 8, 1896 in the religious order of the Canossian Daughters of Charity. For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa. She was gentle and charismatic and was often referred to lovingly as the "little brown sister" or honorably as the "black mother." She died on the evening of February 8, 1947. Pope John Paul II canonized her on October 1, 2000.

February 10 – Tuesday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**Free from all thoughts of 'I' and 'mine', a man finds absolute peace.
(Bhagavad Gita)**

1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30

Solomon prayed for his people in the temple, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel. This excerpt gives us the honor that he gave to God, followed by his prayer for his people.

Psalm 84

**My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest in which she puts her young -
Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God!**

Mark 7:1-13

The Pharisees and some of the experts in the law gathered around Jesus and questioned him about the disciples violating some of the traditions and customs. Jesus spoke to them about how they had made an art of observing details of the law while ignoring the very purpose of the law.

For their guidance of life, they did not depend on listening to God - they depended on clever arguments and debates, ingenious interpretations of legal experts. They nullified God's law in favor of their traditions and practices.

Such cleverness can never be the basis of true religion. True religion can never be the product of man's mind.

True religion must come, not from man's ingenious discoveries, but from the simple and humble listening to and acceptance of the voice of God.

Never allow rules to paralyze the claim of love.

Customs, traditions, rules and regulations that prevent us from helping others in need, are inconsistent with the law of God.

Saint of the Day, February 10 – St. Scholastica and 104 other saints are remembered this day.

Scholastica and her twin brother were born around 480 in Nursia, Umbria, Italy of wealthy parents. She and her brother Benedict were brought up together until the time he left to pursue studies in Rome. Twins often share the same interests and ideas with an equal intensity. Scholastica and her twin brother, Benedict, established religious communities within a few miles from each other. Little is known of Scholastica's early life. She founded a religious community for women near Monte Cassino at Plombariola, five miles from where her brother governed a monastery.

The twins visited each other once a year in a farmhouse because Scholastica was not permitted inside the monastery. They spent these times discussing spiritual matters. According to the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, the brother and sister spent their last day together in prayer and conversation. Scholastica sensed her death was close at hand and she begged Benedict to stay with her until the next day. He refused her request because he did not want to spend a night outside the monastery, thus breaking his own Rule. Scholastica asked God to let her brother remain and a severe thunderstorm broke out, preventing Benedict and his monks from returning to the abbey.

Benedict cried out, "God forgive you, Sister. What have you done?" Scholastica replied, "I asked a favor of you and you refused. I asked it of God, and he granted it." Brother and sister parted the next morning after their long discussion. Three days later, February 10, 543, Benedict was praying in his monastery and saw the soul of his sister rising heavenward in the form of a white dove. Benedict then announced the death of his sister to the monks and later buried her in the tomb he had prepared for himself.

February 11 – Wednesday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**Do your work, then step back. The only path to serenity.
(Lao Tzu)**

1 Kings 10:1-10

The queen of Sheba heard about the Wisdom of Solomon and came to test him with subtle questions on every subject that she was interested in. She was amazed, impressed and inspired by the Wisdom of Solomon far beyond her expectations. She gifted the king with the best from her country as a sign of her respect and gratitude.

Pray for God's wisdom for guidance, direction, and discernment in making choices.

Psalm 37

**Commit to the Lord your way;
Trust in him and he will act,
He will make justice dawn for you like the light;
Bright as the noonday shall be your vindication.**

Mark 7:14-23

Jesus had talked about how they had made an art of observing details of the law while ignoring the very purpose of the law...how they depended on clever arguments and debates, ingenious interpretations of legal experts for their guidance and failed to depend on listening to God and God's ways. They nullified God's law in favor of their traditions and practices.

They had considered many things and events and situations that could defile a person and make him impure or unclean. In this excerpt, Jesus addressed these sources of defilement. Things are neither clean nor unclean in a religious or spiritual sense of the term. What defiles a person is his evil design. Jesus invited his listeners to go beyond what is done to the motivation or the intent behind what is done. Jesus even gives us a list of things that come from within that makes a person unclean. They all refer to inner designs from which evil actions proceed.

Jesus calls his listeners to self-examination, a soul searching – not just what is done, but the motivation behind whatever is done.

Saint of the Day, February 11 - Our Lady of Lourdes and 8 other saints are remembered this day.

On February 11, 1858, Mary appeared to 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous. This was the first of 18 visits. When Bernadette asked the Lady's identity, she replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception." On December 8, 1854, just four years earlier, Pope Pius IX had proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in the apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*. The Blessed

Virgin, through Bernadette, had come to call sinners to a change of heart. Her message was a request for prayer and penance. She also instructed Bernadette to tell the priests that a chapel was to be built on the site and processions held.

Bernadette was a sickly child of poor parents. Their practice of the Catholic faith was scarcely more than lukewarm. Bernadette could pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed. She also knew the prayer of the Miraculous Medal: "O Mary conceived without sin."

During interrogations Bernadette gave an account of what she saw. It was "something white in the shape of a girl." It was "a pretty young girl with a rosary over her arm." Her white robe was encircled by a blue girdle. She wore a white veil. There was a yellow rose on each foot. A rosary was in her hand. Bernadette was also impressed by the fact that the lady did not use the informal form of address (tu), but the polite form (vous). The humble virgin appeared to a humble girl and treated her with dignity.

Through that humble girl, Mary revitalized and continues to revitalize the faith of millions of people. People began to flock to Lourdes from other parts of France and from all over the world. In 1862 Church authorities confirmed the authenticity of the apparitions and authorized the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes became worldwide in 1907.

February 12 – Thursday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**Meet this transient world with neither grasping nor fear,
trust the unfolding of life and you will attain true serenity.**

(Bhagavad Gita)

1 Kings 11:4-13

In his old age, influenced by his wives, Solomon turned to other gods. He built high places for the gods of all his foreign wives. Solomon thus became unfaithful to the Covenant, unfaithful to the heritage of his faith, unfaithful to his ancestral traditions, unfaithful to his roots. This excerpt from the book of Kings gives the unfaithfulness of Solomon as the reason for the breakdown of the kingdom.

Be faithful to all your commitments. Lack of faithfulness causes brokenness within, in families and in communities.

Psalm 106

Happy are they, who observe what is right,
Who do always what is just.
Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people,
Visit us with your saving help.

Mark: 7:24-30

Jesus went to the territory of Tyre and Sidon, to the Gentile territory... began to break down barriers between Jews and Gentiles...**Be a welcoming person. Be open to other cultures and traditions.**

He met a Syrophoenician woman. She refused to take “NO” for an answer. She was a woman with a tragedy of an ill daughter at home. Her faith was real. Her faith was tested and her prayer was answered. What the Jews threw away, the gentiles accepted! This woman stood strong, persevered, persisted.....this is hope alive! She came with passionate hope and refused to be discouraged! **Be strong! Stand your ground! Be patient! And persevere in your efforts.**

She had a sense of humor and she could fall back on it in the face of what seemed to be an insult. She had an urgent need, she was in the midst of trouble, she could have felt the insult, but with a little sense of humor, she persisted with unconquerable hope...

May you be blessed with hope in the face of difficult situations! Bless others with a smile on your face when you feel insulted!

Saint of the day, February 12 - St. Apollonia and 19 other saints are remembered this day.

We have no knowledge of the early life of Apollonia. She was martyred in the year 249 for not renouncing her faith during the reign of Emperor Philip. The persecution of Christians began in Alexandria during the reign of the Emperor Philip. The first victim of the pagan mob was an old man named Metrius, who was tortured and then stoned to death. The second person who refused to worship their false idols was a Christian woman named Quinta. Her words infuriated the mob and she was scourged and stoned.

While most of the Christians were fleeing the city, abandoning all their worldly possessions, an old deaconess, Apollonia, was seized. The crowds beat her, knocking out all of her teeth. Then they lit a large fire and threatened to throw her in it if she did not curse her God. She begged them to wait a moment, acting as if she was considering their requests. Instead, she jumped willingly into the flames and so suffered martyrdom.

The account of the life of St. Apollonia was written by St. Dionysius to Fabian, Bishop of Antioch. She is considered the patron of dental diseases and is often invoked by those with toothaches. Ancient art depicts her with a golden tooth at the end of her necklace. Also in art, she is seen with pincers holding a tooth.

February 13 - Friday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Want serenity? Accept this moment...this is a God-moment!

1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19

Jeroboam left Jerusalem. Ahijah, the prophet demonstrated to him how the kingdom will be divided and only one tribe will remain with the sons of Solomon by cutting up his cloak into twelve pieces. The ten pieces represented the then northern tribes of Israel. All of these are seen as the consequence of Solomon's unwise choices and unholy practices. Remember Solomon was the wisest of men and he was faithful to God and God's law.

Psalm 81

**There shall be no strange gods among you,
Nor shall you worship any alien god.
I, the Lord, am your God,
Who led you forth from the land of Egypt.**

Mark 7:31-37

Some people brought a deaf man with a speech impediment to Jesus for healing. Jesus put his finger into the man's ears and spitting, touched his tongue and said, "Be opened". The man listened and he spoke! Jesus took the man aside. Deaf folks are always a little embarrassed and when someone shouts at them, they become more embarrassed. Jesus tenderly cared for the man for whom life was difficult and healed him. **May your touch be comforting and healing! Be sensitive to those who are vulnerable!**

For Jesus this was not another case. He was a person and this person was in need. The man had a special need and he needed special attention and he was given special consideration. Jesus treated him with compassion. **Be compassionate in your relationships! Be considerate and tenderly care for those in need!**

The people said, "he has done everything well". **Do everything well. Give everything your best!**

Saint of the Day, February 13 - St. Catherine del Ricci and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Catherine was born Alessandra Lucrezia Romola de' Ricci in Florence in 1522. Her baptismal name was Alexandrina, but she took the name of Catherine upon entering religious life. From her early childhood, she manifested a great love of prayer. At age 6 or 7, her father enrolled her in a school run by a monastery of Benedictine nuns, near their home, where her aunt, Luisa de' Ricci, was the abbess. There she developed a lifelong devotion to the Passion of Christ.

After a brief return home, she entered the convent of the Dominican nuns at Prat in Tuscany, in her fourteenth year. In May 1535 she received the religious habit from her uncle, Friar Timoteo de' Ricci, O.P., who was confessor to the convent, and the religious name of Catherine, after the Dominican tertiary, Catherine of Siena.

Her novitiate was a time of trial. She would experience ecstasies during her routine, which caused her to seem asleep during community prayer services, dropping plates and food, so much so that the community began to question her competence, if not her sanity. Eventually the other Sisters became aware of the spiritual basis for her behavior.

While very young, she was chosen Mistress of Novices, then sub-prioress, and at twenty-five years of age she became perpetual prioress. As the prioress, she was an effective and greatly admired administrator. She was an advisor on various topics to princes, bishops and cardinals. She corresponded with three figures who were destined to become popes: Pope Marcellus II, Pope Clement VIII, and Pope Leo XI. An expert on religion, management and administration, her advice was widely sought. She gave counsel both in person and through exchanging letters. It is reported that she was extremely effective and efficient in her work, managing her priorities very well. She also was an ascetic, engaged in extreme fasting and other forms of penance and sacrifice. She died in 1590 after a prolonged illness.

February 14 – Saturday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**Movement is good for the body. Stillness is good for the mind.
Serenity is good for the spirit.**

1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34

Jeroboam built altars to false gods and established feasts in their honor in an effort to maintain control over the people. He was afraid of the people shifting their loyalty to Rehoboam, king of Judah. Jeroboam's unfaithfulness to the heritage, to the faith tradition of his ancestors led to his own ruin and that of his people.

Be faithful to your heritage of faith, to the roots of your spirituality.

Psalm 106

**We have sinned, we and our fathers;
we have committed crimes; we have done wrong.
Our fathers in Egypt,
considered not your wonders.....**

Mark 8:1-10

Jesus continued to care for those who followed him. His compassion reached not only to the spiritual and mental healing, but also to the physical hunger of people. In this excerpt, Mark tells us that he fed four thousand people with seven loaves of bread and two fish. The hungry people were filled and satisfied, and an abundance left over from the little they had.

Be compassionate. Let your compassion reach out and touch people where they really hurt, where it really matters.

One of the most amazing things about Jesus is his sensitivity to basic human needs. His mission was to proclaim the Kingdom of God. He had a “Gospel” to proclaim. In the midst of fulfilling his urgent mission, he became aware of the very basic human need, which in this case was hunger and attending to this need became an integral part of proclaiming the reign of God.

May caring for the poor and the hungry become part of your lifestyle!

The disciples had problems in feeding the hungry....they saw down-to-earth practical problem in a deserted place. Jesus challenged them to rely on the available resources and do the best with what is available rather than think or worry about what is not there.

Help where help is needed with what you have, even when it doesn't seem adequate.

Saint of the Day, February 14 - Saints Cyril & Methodius and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

The two brothers were born in Thessalonica. Cyril was born around 827 and Methodius around 815. Cyril was the youngest of seven brothers. He was born Constantine but was given the name Cyril upon becoming a monk in Rome shortly before his death. Methodius was born Michael and was given the name Methodius upon becoming a monk.

They lost their father when Cyril was fourteen, and one of the powerful ministers of the Empire, became their protector. This minister was also responsible for initiating a far-reaching educational program within the Empire which culminated in the establishment of the University of Magnaura, where Cyril was to teach. Cyril was ordained as priest sometime after his education, while his brother Methodius remained a deacon until 867/868.

Because their father was an officer in a part of Greece inhabited by many Slavs, these two Greek brothers ultimately became missionaries, teachers, and patrons of the Slavic peoples. After a brilliant course of studies, Cyril refused the governorship of a district such as his brother had accepted among the Slavic-speaking population. Cyril withdrew to a monastery where his brother Methodius had become a monk after some years in a governmental post.

A decisive change in their lives occurred when the Duke of Moravia asked the Eastern Emperor Michael for political independence from German rule and ecclesiastical autonomy (having their own clergy and liturgy). Cyril and Methodius undertook the missionary task. Cyril's first work was to invent an alphabet, still used in some Eastern liturgies. His followers probably formed the Cyrillic alphabet. Together they translated the Gospels, the psalter, Paul's letters and the liturgical books into Slavonic, and composed a Slavonic liturgy.

That and their free use of the vernacular in preaching led to opposition from the German clergy. The bishop refused to consecrate Slavic bishops and priests, and Cyril was forced to appeal to Rome. On the visit to Rome, he and Methodius had the joy of seeing their new liturgy approved by Pope Adrian II. Cyril died in Rome 50 days after taking the monastic habit.

Methodius continued mission work for 16 more years. He was papal legate for all the Slavic peoples and consecrated a bishop. When much of their former territory was removed from their jurisdiction, the Bavarian bishops retaliated with a violent storm of accusation against Methodius. As a result, Emperor Louis exiled Methodius for three years. Pope John VIII secured his release.

Because the Frankish clergy continued their accusations, Methodius had to go to Rome to defend himself against charges of heresy and uphold his use of the Slavonic liturgy. He was again vindicated. Legend has it that in a feverish period of activity, Methodius translated the whole Bible into Slavonic in eight months. He died on Tuesday of Holy Week, surrounded by his disciples, in his cathedral church.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Lord, teach me to be simple and humble in my ways!
Help me accept myself the way you made me to be,
live the way you want me to live and be what you want me to be. Amen**

